

Doctor at Kennedy Autopsy Explains Sketch Controversy

Star 11/29/66

By the Associated Press

A doctor who helped perform the autopsy on President John F. Kennedy said today he made a diagram error in a hasty "worksheet" sketch which was not drawn for the final autopsy report. Some critics have used the sketch in challenging the Warren Commission Report.

Dr. J. Thornton Boswell said the diagram showed that the lower bullet wound was in the President's back. Actually, he said, the wound was at the back of the base of the neck.

The position of the wound was crucial to determining the trajectory of the bullet.

Boswell said the diagram was drawn quickly during the autopsy as "rough notes" and was not intended to be exact. He pointed out that longhand notes he made on the sketch gave the correct, precise location of the wound.

Notes Wound Location

And Boswell noted that the written autopsy report and the official testimony to the Warren Commission, which investigated the assassination, both located the wound at the base of the neck.

However, FBI reports of the autopsy stated that the wound was in the back.

This led some critics to suggest that perhaps the wound actually was in the back.

If this were true, these critics claimed, the bullet could not have come out Kennedy's throat. Therefore, they said, the bullet could not have struck both Kennedy and Texas Gov. John Connally, who was sitting in front of Kennedy.

Tells of Photos

In an interview, Boswell said that when he examined the autopsy photographs for the first time this Nov. 1, the pictures

showed clearly that the wound was in the neck. The photographs are in the National Archives and are not available to the public.

Boswell also said, however, that he and the chief autopsy pathologist, Capt. J. J. Humes, have concluded that the autopsy photographs cannot prove the Warren Commission's theory that a single bullet struck both Kennedy and Connally. Humes has declined to discuss the matter.

The Warren Report states that "although it is not necessary to any essential findings of the commission to determine just which shot hit Gov. Connally, there is very persuasive evidence from the experts to indicate that the same bullet which pierced the President's throat also caused Gov. Connally's wounds."

Conceded Possibility

One of the critics of the Warren Report, Edward Jay Epstein, used the diagram and the FBI reports to suggest the possibility that there may have been a second assassin.

But Epstein, author of the book "Inquest," conceded in the current issue of Esquire magazine that if the autopsy photos showed the wound in the neck, there probably would be no further doubt about the autopsy report and that a second assassin would be ruled out.

While Boswell's statement contradicts critics who have based their doubts on the sketch and the FBI reports, some use other arguments to attack the single-bullet theory and single assassin finding.

Boswell, a former Navy doctor now in private practice, said of his sketch error: "This was unfortunate. If I had known at the time that the sketch would

become public record I would have been more careful."

Photos Exact

Its sole purpose, he said, was to indicate for the autopsy doctors "right, left, front, back—things like that." The photographs were to provide the exact visual description, he said.

As for the FBI reports, Boswell said they were simply wrong. He added that the FBI agents at the autopsy were not trained in medicine.

The autopsy report concluded that a single bullet hit both Kennedy and Connally, and Boswell said in the interview "there is absolutely no doubt in our minds" now.

Connally contends he was not struck by the bullet that passed through Kennedy.

Connally says he is sure only one sniper fired and that he does not believe the Warren Commission investigation should be reopened.

